

days. The rescue helicopters are escorted by AH-1W Cobra helicopters, which came under fire but were not damaged during separate, sporadic incidents on March 14. In addition, a 150-member Marine rifle company has also been inserted near the American Embassy to provide additional security for the evacuation.

The Marines involved in this operation are from the Marine Expeditionary Unit currently operating in the Adriatic Sea. Although U.S. forces are equipped for combat, the evacuation is being undertaken solely for the purpose of protecting American citizens and property. United States forces will redeploy as soon as evacuation operations are complete and enhanced security at the American Embassy is no longer required.

I have taken this action pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive.

I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution. I appreciate the support of the Congress in this action to protect American citizens and the American Embassy in Tirana.

Sincerely,

**William J. Clinton**

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Strom Thurmond, President pro tempore of the Senate.

### **Exchange With Reporters on Arrival at the White House**

*March 16, 1997*

#### **Recovery From Knee Surgery**

**Q.** How are you feeling, sir?

**Q.** Good morning, Mr. President. How are you feeling, sir?

**The President.** I feel fine today. I was a little sore yesterday, you know, the first day after the operation when the pain started to wear off—I mean, the painkiller, you know, the anesthesia. But I feel fine today, and I've

done 2 days of therapy, learned to use my crutches.

Hillary wanted me to come home before she left for Africa. She and Chelsea wanted me well settled, so that's what I'm doing.

**Q.** Is that going to be difficult for you, to use crutches for the next few months?

**The President.** I just want to do it well. It will be an interesting experience. I just want to be careful and not make any mistakes and do it well. But I think I'll be perfectly mobile and perfectly fine.

I also want to say that the medical team I had at the Bethesda Naval Medical Center did a magnificent job. They really were wonderful, and I feel very fortunate. And the American people should know that that military medical center is a very good place, not just for the President but for everybody who is treated there.

**Q.** Did they have to twist your arm to get you to delay the trip to Helsinki for a day?

**The First Lady.** No twisting of arms—or any other limb. [Laughter]

**The President.** No, because I can go back to Copenhagen and do that probably when we do the NATO meeting.

**Q.** Sir, does it hurt every time you move?

**The President.** No.

**Q.** It doesn't?

**The President.** No. You just have to learn to use a few different muscles. But it's quite interesting. I mean, it will be a learning experience. It's like going back to school and learning some new things.

**Q.** Do you think this will get you any sympathy votes in Congress for any of your bills? [Laughter]

**The President.** I don't know, but if it does, I'll take them any way I can get them. [Laughter] I'd be very grateful if it did.

**Q.** Glad to have him home, Mrs. Clinton?

**The First Lady.** Yes, I'm very glad to have him home.

**The President.** Goodbye.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:46 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

**Statement on the Murder of John Slane in Northern Ireland**

*March 17, 1997*

I am deeply saddened by the murder last Friday of John Slane in Belfast. Our sympathy goes out to Mr. Slane's family and friends. This horrific killing deserves universal condemnation. I hope the British authorities will quickly identify who is responsible.

As I have said so many times, nothing worth having in Northern Ireland can be achieved by killing and maiming, terror, and threats. The people of Northern Ireland deserve a future of peace and prosperity unmarred by brutality and fear in their daily lives. I urge the people of both communities to make known in every way they can their repudiation of violence by any group, for any reason. I will continue to stand with those who stand for peace, today as we commemorate the saint who brought the message of peace to Ireland, and every day.

**Remarks on the Withdrawal of the Director of Central Intelligence Nomination and an Exchange With Reporters**

*March 18, 1997*

**The President.** Let me begin by saying that while I do understand his reasons, Tony Lake's decision to withdraw from consideration as Director of Central Intelligence is a real loss to our country and to me. He would have been an outstanding CIA Director because of his intelligence, his unquestioned integrity, his extremely valuable experience. I respect his decision because nobody should have to endure what he has endured in the course of this nomination. But make no mistake about it, it's a loss for the country.

For 4 years, Tony Lake was one of my closest advisers and one of my most trusted ones. He was an integral part of every foreign policy decision we made, and his legacy can be seen around the world, from an end to the war in Bosnia to a fresh start for peace in Haiti, from real hope for peace in the Middle East and Northern Ireland to real progress on arms control. He is a patriot, a profes-

sional, and a statesman. Our Nation will miss his service very much and so will I.

This episode says a lot about how so much work is done in our Nation's Capital. For too long, we have allowed ordinary political processes and honest disagreements among honorable people to degenerate first into political sniping, then into political revenge. And too often, that results in political destruction that absolutely builds nothing for the American people and is not worthy of our responsibilities to them. It is past time for all of us to stop remembering who shot first and why, and instead, to start remembering why we are here and the fact that the American people sent us here to work on their concerns and their future.

The cycle of political destruction must end. And I hope we will let it end today. We can't let partisan bickering stop us from doing the work we were sent here to do. I sense that more and more Democrats and Republicans believe that and believe as I do that we have to seize this opportunity to pass a bipartisan agreement to balance the budget.

There are now some new and hopeful signs that we are in a position to do that. Last month, I proposed a balanced budget plan that secures Medicare and Medicaid, extends health care coverage to more children, strengthens education, gives working families tax relief, and protects the environment. I believe that's the best way to balance the budget.

As you know, as part of that plan, the day after my Inauguration I made an offer to the Republican Congress on Medicare, proposing savings that moved halfway toward those envisioned in the most recent Republican plan. Yesterday the Republican leaders showed me flexibility on tax cuts and economic assumptions. This new flexibility is a very positive sign, and I applaud their comments. They move us closer than ever to the point where we can reach an agreement on a balanced budget that is good for the American people.

I'm also encouraged by the extensive work being done by people of good will on both sides of the aisle throughout the Congress. Now it is time to build on all this momentum and make this a season of bipartisan coopera-